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OUR "GOLDEN RULE"

MISSION BAND.

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BY MISS TAPSCOTT.

An Address before the Peterboro' Convention.

In making the request that I should give a talk on Mission Bands at this Convention, Mrs. Lillie said: "We are told that yours is a model Band; now, just tell us how you did it, how do you conduct your meetings, and what are your plans of work?"

The answer to this question must be my excuse for whatever of a personal character is found in the following paper. Let no one think, however, that we have reached perfection as a Band. We are simply aiming at our ideal, and such commendation as the above calls forth many a deprecatory confession from our dear boys and girls, though at the same time it has the effect of making us seek to be more worthy of the compliment. Yet, while disclaiming the honor of being called a model Band, we believe that the foundation principles of our work have been true and good, and very grateful are we to our Heavenly Father for the blessing that has attended our service. It is four years now since the "Golden Rule Band" was organized, during which time more than thirty of our members have confessed faith in Christ, and over twenty have joined the church. Of these, one is now at McMaster University, fitting himself for mission-

ary work in his own or some other country. Another is hoping to follow his example in October. While several of our boys and girls are attending the High School or Collegiate Institute, preparing themselves for active, intelligent Christian work, either at home or abroad.

The question is sometimes asked, "How do you retain the older members in your Band?" We answer, the Band is theirs, it was started with them and for them; the responsibility and honor of it have always been thrown upon them. From among them we choose our officers (except the ushers, who may be younger); of them are our committees composed, to them chiefly we look for our programmes, and we seek to make our exercises of such a character that the oldest will feel the dignity of participating in them. Again, we are asked, "Do you not find it hard to interest the older members in Missions?" Of course, if we failed to interest them, we would fail to retain them as members; but surely, with such varied and exhaustless mines from which to draw our information, the blame would be ours did we fail to interest them. What Christian society has at its command such resources? History, geography, travel, adventure, biography, Scripture, all are at the disposal of our workers, and what boy would fail to be captivated by some of these subjects?

To return now to "*How we did it.*" We began with this two-fold object—the conversion of our own members and their training in Christian service for others.

Christ wants *them* first, then *theirs*. No service can be really acceptable to Him that is not prompted by love.

So while all the members are encouraged to take some part in the meetings, none but Christians are asked to lead in prayer, or appointed to office. The Superintendent and Treasurer must be members of the church.

On the last Thursday of each quarter our officers and committees are changed—the boys and girls acting alternately. Our pastor trained the Band to elect their officers in the conventional manner; the candidates names are written on the blackboard, and afterwards voted on in order. As the retiring officers step down from the platform they each make a little speech—it may be only a sentence; it may be a carefully prepared little address, giving a resumé of the past quarter's work, and hopes for the ensuing one. Then amid the cheers of the Band, the newly-elected officer steps up to the vacated chair, but before sitting down he acknowledges the favor of the election, and promises to faithfully perform the duties of the office.

Our *Executive*, *Visiting* and *Look-out Committees* are each composed of four members; two girls to represent the girls and two boys to act for the boys.

The Look-out Committee try to get recruits from the Sunday school, for, strange to say, in many cases Band members come from outside the school altogether, and, while we welcome these, we are especially anxious that our own scholars should benefit by the teachings of the Band, and much can be accomplished by a good, wide-awake Look-out Committee.

The Visiting Committee report any case of sickness among the members, then, if it is thought advisable, they

are requested either to visit or write a letter of sympathy to the sufferer.

The Executive Committee is really the backbone of our Society ; its meetings are always greatly enjoyed, and give tone to the work of the whole quarter.

All the officers, as well as the four specially appointed, act on this Committee, and many older members receive, and gladly accept, an invitation to be present at this meeting, which is held either at the close of the quarterly meeting or at one of the homes during the week. In a delightfully informal way we group our chairs round in a cluster, and talk over our work generally. No lack of suggestions, ideas and kindly criticisms where from ten to fifteen enthusiastic young people are gathered together !

Questions of order and discipline, topics for study, work for committees, plans for concerts, all are discussed and settled by this Committee. Throughout all the true spirit of our work is brought prominently forward—the advancement of Christ's cause, because it *is* His. Then, before we separate, while every heart is aglow with enthusiasm and hope and determination, we bow our heads, and one after another dedicate ourselves and our service anew to our King.

Upon the new Secretary devolves the work of revising the roll, members who have been absent four weeks without a good excuse, must bear the penalty of having their names struck off the list, but they are allowed the privilege of joining again. The plan of assigning to each member the name of a missionary or prominent Christian is adopted by us. Moody, Gordon, Pierson, Warszwaiak, and our own McEwen and McDiarmid, are all

represented on our roll. Special interest in individual workers is thus created, as we try to furnish our members with some information regarding the person whose name each bears.

Candidates for membership are received in the following manner: After the roll-call, the President asks if there are any present who wish to join our Society. One of the members rises, and, addressing the chair, proposes the name of the candidate. A vote of the Band is then taken, and, if favorable, the President declares the person a member of our Band. The name and address, which have already been written out, are then handed to the Secretary, and added by him to the probation roll. After four weeks, if the member has attended each meeting, his name is transferred to the regular roll of membership.

Perhaps one of the most pleasing features of our Band is the singing. About twice a year we hold a concert. In preparation for this we select from various books six or eight hymns. These are printed by the boys on the neostyle. After being carefully taught to the Band and sung at a concert, they are used in our regular meetings. In this way we have always bright, lively and appropriate music, at a cost to the Band of not more than one dollar a year. To those leaders who have not a neostyle at command, this suggestion may seem only tantalizing. What help is there for them? Scores of bright missionary hymns are published, but they are scattered through as many books. If some one would collect and compile these in a book, what a boon he would confer upon Band leaders.

Another feature of our work is a little paper edited by our Band, called the *Watch Tower*, whose name suggests its mission. The editor and editorial staff are elected quarterly. The staff assist the editor in gleaning the latest facts from various mission fields. Interesting incidents in connection with our own or sister Bands are also noted. The paper has holes punched in the margin, so that after being read the numbers may be kept on file.

During the first year quite a large sum of money was expended in a missionary library, which has been of untold service in the preparation of our programmes. One of the boys or girls would prepare an account of the life and work of some missionary, commit it to memory, and tell it to the Band. In some cases the preparation of the sketch had to be done by the pastor, or some other friend, but more frequently by the members themselves. In this way we have studied the lives of a great many prominent workers. Always at our concerts we have one of such addresses, and no part of our programme is listened to with more rapt attention.

We talk to our Band occasionally of the officers of the general Society, of the help Mrs. Newman and Mrs. McMaster give to us through the *Link* and *Visitor*, and also of the Missionary Bureau of which Miss Stark has charge. Our young people know the relation that Mrs. C. T. Stark bears to all the Bands of Ontario, and if ever she or any of the other officers says a kind or appreciative word about our service, the Band hears it at the next meeting.

Some of our members thought that our money went

directly to India or Grande Ligne ; the correction of this idea has brought them in touch with Miss Elliot and Miss Dryden. They are told of the way these young ladies watch each Circle and Band, of the reports they publish and send out, so that we can know just what kind of work our friends in other places are doing. We do not want our young people to think they are a little world of their own, but auxiliary to the general society, the officers of which know exactly how their junior partners are progressing.

We have tried also to bring our Band into sympathetic and helpful touch with sister Bands in the same Association. Visits have been exchanged, and letters of greeting and kindly encouragement written and answers received, which are read aloud by the Secretary. At our associational gatherings the Band is represented by one or more delegates, the Secretary reading her own report. The purpose of Associations and Conventions is also explained.

Now let me describe to you one of our weekly meetings. On the platform are three little tables. At the first, to my right, and near the door, sit the ushers, whose duty it is to distribute and collect the hymn sheets, take up the collection, and show strangers to seats, at the centre table sit the Superintendent and President, and on the left the Secretary and the Treasurer.

The officers are always on hand ten or fifteen minutes before the hour, to talk over matters and make sure that the programme is all provided for, and carefully written out, so that there may be no hitch when the exercises are once started. Promptness in beginning and closing

is one of our rules, and the minute the clock points to eight, the officers hasten to their places. At the sound of the bell there is a hush, and on every face a look of eager expectancy. The President rises and requests the ushers to distribute the hymn sheets. This takes but a minute. Then the first hymn is announced and sung most heartily, after which one or two of the members engage in prayer, or we repeat the Lord's prayer together. Instead of reading a chapter the Band rises and repeats in concert some passages of Scripture, and the "Missionary Creed" which was published in the *Link* some time ago. The roll call, and reception of new members, reading of minutes, and taking of the collection follow. After the collection, the President asks for the report of the Treasurer, who rises and says, "Miss (or Mr.) President, I beg to inform you that there are so many present, and so many cents collection." If the Band consider the report satisfactory, they greet its announcement with hearty applause. The reason for the use of a stated formula by the Treasurer and others, in giving their reports, or making resolutions, is that it makes it much easier for them if they know exactly what they are required to say.

Now of course these dear boys and girls are nearly always timid, and shy, and nervous, and in many cases it would be utterly impossible for them to go through with their tasks, were it not for the close proximity of the Superintendent. That gives them courage, for the Superintendent has confidence in them that they can do this work, and so they are bound to try. They will not

disappoint their leader, for they love her, and she expects such great things of them.

They require considerable training and practice, yes, and coaxing and encouragement, for there is a great difference between taking part in a programme, and performing the duties of an office. But each week they grow stronger, and the voice that at the beginning of the term could only be heard by the few nearest, can at its close be heard by the furthest one in the room.

Perhaps some Band leader is ready now to exclaim : "These are all the old, old methods. We have tried most of them many times, and yet our Band is not successful." It may be, dear sister, that there is something else needed even more than method and plans. What about your own interest in the work ? Does the Band know that in you they have a leader who will never yield to discouragement, that though you may not always be able to depend upon them, they can always depend upon you ? Do they derive inspiration from your example, as well as from your teaching ? Is your own heart all aglow with love to Christ, and love to the perishing ?

"No," you say, "that is just what I lack. I do not love the children or the work ; my only reason for taking it up at all, is because no one else in our church was willing to do so ; and besides, my time is so fully occupied, that I find it a great trial to have to give up an evening a week to those tiresome girls and boys, as well as the time that is necessary for preparation."

Well, that is a temptation that is perhaps common to

all Band leaders. Let me tell you a thought that always helps me when this suggestion presents itself—I do it *for Christ's sake;* these dear young souls are those for whom Christ died, they are not very lovely or lovable, some of them, but they *need* love; and therefore He loved them. The same is true also of the heathen, so repulsive, and almost loathsome to us, yet not perhaps farther removed from us, than we are from the angels; and then they are part of the Bride of Christ, and must be made ready for the Bridegroom.

A young man came to me once, and said he would like me to try and be helpful to a certain young lady in whom he was much interested. I knew that, at that time, the young girl was not in any respect the equal of her friend, though doubtless he saw in her possibilities which I did not; but, for his sake, and because he asked me, I determined that his request should be honored.

The young girl was converted, and educated, and has developed into a noble and useful woman. Thus what I probably would never have thought of doing under other circumstances, I was willing and glad to do for the sake of the one who had honored me with the request.

Even so with our Lord; He bids us "tell every creature." We say, "Yes, Lord, but some of them are so disagreeable." "But they are mine, they are to live with me for ever. For my sake will you not try and make them a little more worthy of me, a little more fit for my home, and for companionship with my Father, and the holy angels?" and we answer, "Yes, dear Lord, we cannot refuse *that* request. For Thy sake we can do

what nothing else could prompt us to do. We will work for them, and think and plan for them ; only do Thou keep us from getting discouraged, keep us brave and strong, loving and gentle."

If this is your determination, dear sister, your Band will no longer be the trial to you that it has been. The enthusiasm and earnestness which you evince in other matters, you will bring to this work—and the result will very soon surprise and delight you. By working through your officers, and older members, and taking it for granted that they are equally interested with yourself, they will very soon become so. Talk personally and privately with some of the boys who attend but seldom, tell them you have been thinking it would be a good thing to have a missionary concert each week ; that you have several readings and recitations selected, and "I want you, Joe, to prepare this one for next Thursday evening. I have invited a few friends to be present, and want them to see how well we can conduct our meetings all by ourselves." That boy is put on his mettle at once. To an older lad, give a selection from a missionary magazine or a leaflet from the Bureau, asking him to prepare it so that he can tell it in his own words, on Thursday night, as you are expecting a few strangers and must have a nice little programme for them.

Have a third conduct a missionary catechism, preparing the questions beforehand, and giving them to those who will promise to be present and answer them. Go to some young lady in the choir and say, "I have a little missionary hymn here, will you teach it to Ethel and

Jennie and play it for them at our next meeting ?" Perhaps the choir leader would train four of the boys to sing a quartette. One of the church members has had a letter recently from some missionary. Borrow it, and give it to some one who will read it over till she knows its contents by heart, asking her to tell them, with a few other facts relating to the same missionary, to the Band on Thursday night.

Well, Thursday night comes, and with it a goodly number of your young friends, who having caught some of your own enthusiasm are expecting an unusually good time. You have come early, so as to greet each member, and find out if those who have promised to assist in the programme are all prepared. Possibly, to your dismay, you find that several of these are absent. What then ? scold, fret, get discouraged, say it is no use trying, no one is to be depended upon ? Oh no ! like a wise Band Leader you have come prepared for just such an emergency. From your portfolio you take other selections, and distribute to a few who can read readily at sight, asking them to do so if called upon by the President. Or some visitor may be asked to speak a few words. Thus instead of having a dull meeting, the hour will be more than filled. When Sunday comes and you meet the delinquents, let them know that their presence was missed, and that they will be expected to take part the following week.

But time for all this ! Where is it to be found ? Simply by bearing the work ever in mind, and making use of the odd moments. As you read the papers and magazines,

read not for yourself alone, but with the thought of the Band ever in mind. If you find a suitable poem, give it to a friend to copy for Harry or Bessie ; if a touching little story, or appeal, put the book where you will not forget to give it to some one who will repeat it. Form the habit of being constantly on the look out for material from all sources. "Where there's a will, there's a way," says the old proverb.

It may be that some Band Leaders who hear me can procure the *Baptist Union*, the organ of the B. Y. P. U. A. It contains, under the heading of "The Junior Movement," much material which our leaders could use with advantage.

Mrs. Wilkins and Miss McKean have won laurels for work among the young, and in this department, gather from all sources, suggestions which are prepared for just such young people as you wish to instruct, and which in many cases you might be glad to act upon. Certainly the devotional exercises of your Band would be the richer for a study of the lesson given here every week, and illustrated so ably by the children's picture-maker, R. F. Y. Pierce. The "Conquest Course," need not be followed, closely, but the hymns, recitations, and suggestions of all kinds which creep into these bright columns, will certainly repay a careful perusal on your part.

Pastors and Sunday School Superintendents could, some do, render great assistance to our Bands. Others again seem totally to ignore this part of their work ; not deeming indeed that they have any responsibility in connection with it. If they but realized the broad field these

same Bands afford them for training and educating their young people, they would more frequently visit the Band and help with a black-board talk, or a map drill; they would also speak an appreciative and encouraging word occasionally, and so foster the missionary spirit, the lack of which is so greatly deplored in our churches.

Many Bands during the winter, have to be discontinued almost entirely, because the church cannot be heated at a convenient hour. This is very discouraging, yet even then, the indefatigable leader will see that the interest does not die out. A few bright cheery words with the young people after church or Sunday school; a few inquiries as to their contribution to the mission barrels, a little talk about the concert which you intend to have in the spring, or the picnic on somebody's lawn, will keep the work in their minds, and secure their eager interest.

In one of our small country churches, there is a farmer's wife, who has a large cheery kitchen, to which she invites the Band occasionally. Why could not many others do the same? Yes, and at the close of the meeting treat their young visitors to a plate of apples, or a taffy pull? One young lady thinks the greatest obstacle to our work is in the home. Mother, is that true of your home? Do you value so little the privileges that your children enjoy in the Band, that you are carelesss about their attending the meetings? Have you so little sympathy with God's great purpose in sending His Son to our world, that you will not lend your influence to help on the work. Put yourself in the place of the Band Leader, and you will soon find many ways to help and encourage her.

The day school teacher depends upon the mother to see that the "home work" is not neglected, and she has five days in the week; the Band Leader has *one hour*, and her lessons too, are important. Mother, will you not assist her by seeing that your little girl goes regularly to the meeting, with well prepared recitations or thoughtfully written paper? Teach her that though she may not have many pennies to spare for the mite box, or collection plate, Jesus will be equally pleased if she faithfully does the work that is in her reach, and will say of her, "She hath done what she could."

Such training will have an indelible impression upon the child's mind. Children are so quick to catch the spirit, and follow the example of their parents, and no amount of training in the Band, can be half so efficient, as that of the devoted Christian parent. Yes, home is the true place for the fostering and development of the missionary spirit. It is told, that Dr. Hooper, a saintly man, feeling the bitterness of the separation, said to his daughter, who was about to be married to Mr. Capron and go with him to India. "How came you ever to think of going abroad as a Foreign Missionary?" "Why, father," she replied, "I do not count it strange, I have heard you pray for missions all my life, and now I am going to answer your prayers."

How many parents would be willing to have their prayers answered in a similar way?

What our Bands need, and what I would crave for them, is the co-operation of pastors, Sunday school workers, and parents, with the Band Leaders. Then should we see souls saved, lives consecrated, work accomplished and Christ s kingdom come.